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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Proposed US Announcement on Nuclear Testing

1. An immediate announcement that the US planned to undertake atmospheric nuclear tests in mid-April would not, in our view, substantially affect Soviet judgments about the political and military intentions of the Administration. In particular, this action probably would not alter the Soviet leaders' views concerning the US position on disarmament.
2. On the other hand, the USSR would recognize in this move an opportunity to document publicly its standing accusation that the US was not serious about disarmament. The USSR would respond to the announcement by declaring that it considered itself free to test, if its security interests so demanded. The Soviets would probably allow some time to pass before resuming tests themselves, however, in order to maximize their exploitation of the US resumption. The Soviets would charge that the US was planning to sabotage the Geneva Conference. They would probably use this charge to generate added pressure for heads of state participation at Geneva, hopeful that the test announcement would so put the US on the defensive that it would have to accept. This argument would probably appeal to many neutralist leaders, as well as to segments of Western public opinion which are deeply concerned about fallout hazards and the impetus which US testing would give to the nuclear arms race.
3. However, the Soviets would probably stop short of charging that the US had ~~rejected~~ all prospects for a Summit by its decision to resume testing. They obviously wish to keep this gambit open at this time. Nor does it appear that the demand for a Summit has quite the appeal for world opinion that it did several years ago. The experience of 1960 and Khrushchev's UN effort in 1961 have probably in large degree deprived Summity of its magic as a short-cut to settlements of major problems. The reactions to Khrushchev's appeal to turn the disarmament meeting into a Summit seem to show this.

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4. There have already been many indications that the US was seriously considering additional tests and widespread recognition, even by many of those reluctant to have another round of testing, that as a result of the intensive Soviet test series of late 1961 the US probably has strong military reasons for testing. Thus the proposed statement would not come as a bolt from the blue. The sober fashion with which the issue has been treated in US official statements to date should assist in reducing adverse reactions to the proposed announcement. However, the US would be the object of some dismay and uncertainty, even among those prepared to recognize the need to test, unless its statement dealt with the charge of sabotaging the disarmament conference which the USSR would raise. This would be true despite the considerable cynicism which exists regarding Soviet intentions on disarmament. Unless the US gave a reasonable explanation of how its decision to resume testing was consistent with a sincere desire to move ahead with disarmament, many of our friends as well as a high proportion of the neutrals would feel that the US decision, however, much justified on narrow military grounds, represented an important step backward in the disarmament field.

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